

The earliest films such as *Birth Of The Nation* portrayed its people of color as demeaning racist stereotypes. They were portrayed as either incompetent, childlike or criminal. It was understood that the only acceptable social position for a black person was a faithful servant. Even in the later movies, this stereotype persisted, changing in small ways. For example, Bill 'Bo Jangles' Robinson was the stereotypical 'Tom' figure, a 'good negro' whose characteristics would be passive, well-behaved, and loyal. Sidney Poitier was the first African American who won an Academy Award, however he was typecast as a soft-spoken appeaser and the general consensus was that Hollywood used him as a 'token black actor.'

From 1969-1974 a series of Blaxploitation films were released, aimed at black audiences and featuring an all black cast. These were action-adventure flicks that showed black heroes triumphing over 'The Man.' In the midst of the civil rights movement, these movies were meant to reference the black political struggles of the times. However, while some believe that these films are a token of black empowerment, some claim that they perpetuated common white stereotypes about black people. The men featured in these films were often pimps/drug dealers/hyper-sexual, holding no strong political opinions but always willing to take on the establishment. Since the rules regarding the black violence towards whites had eroded, these movies often showed these black heroes fighting violence with violence, contributing to the generalizations and representations of black men in the movies. Black women, although often shown fighting crime and avenging some evil, were still hyper-sexualized, using their bodies to achieve some goal. The ghetto glamorization elevated the lifestyle of pimps and drug dealers, contributing to

the negative stereotypes. Although these movies had the feel of being made by black directors, most of the Blaxploitation films were made by white directors. Hollywood had simply realized that these movies were another way to make money, and had cashed in, essentially making a great deal of movies that reflected a white perception of the black community. It cemented a certain image that would negatively impact the black community to this day.

The movies like *Do The Right Thing* are less obvious in their political focus. Known as the Hood Movies, these films explore themes of life in African-American urban communities, including poverty, violence, gang involvement, education, sports, and music. Films that were not just about black people, but also made by black people. These films deal with urban black culture, often touching on the various struggles of growing up in that type of environment, and raising consciousness by depicting a failed social system. Instead of the black hero triumphing over the man, these films show the stark reality of living in a world where racism still runs rampant, years after the white population congratulated itself on its extinction.